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Memorandum to Holders of SNIE 22-2-63
8 April 1964

MEMORANDUM

To Holders of

SPECIAL NATIONAL INTELLIGENCE ESTIMATE

NUMBER 22-2-63

The French Nuclear Weapons Program

Submitted by the
DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE
Concurred in by the
UNITED STATES INTELLIGENCE BOARD
As indicated overleaf
8 APRIL 1964

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No. 361

The following intelligence organizations participated in the preparation of this estimate:

The Central Intelligence Agency and the intelligence organizations of the Departments of State, Defense, AEC, and NSA.

Concurring:

Director of Intelligence and Research, Department of State
Director, Defense Intelligence Agency
The Atomic Energy Commission Representative to the USIB
Director of the National Security Agency

Abstaining:

The Assistant Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation, the subject being outside of his jurisdiction.

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MEMORANDUM TO HOLDERS OF SNIE 22–2–63 THE FRENCH NUCLEAR WEAPONS PROGRAM

1. In SNIE 22–2–63, "The French Nuclear Weapons Program," dated 24 July 1963, we estimated that the French government was probably not then planning to develop a land-based IRBM as a nuclear delivery vehicle. Since that time, we have acquired evidence affecting that estimate.

2. Authoritative spokesmen in France have referred to a need for a delivery system more advanced than the Mirage IVs to be available before the nuclear submarine missile system, which the French do not expect to become fully operational before the early 1970s. Our evidence shows that the French government has recently been exploring in considerable detail the feasibility of land-based IRBMs as such a delivery system. There is evidence that such IRBMs are proposed by the French Air Force as part of its long-range plans.

3. At present the evidence is insufficient to permit a confident estimate that the top leadership of the government has decided or will decide to establish a land-based system in metropolitan France. We believe, however, that the chances that the French will establish such a system are now considerably greater than we estimated they were when SNIE 22–2–63 was approved.

4. The evidence indicates that the land-based missile which the French are exploring would have a range of about 1,600 nm, and would carry a warhead [redacted] Although some reports indicate that the French believe they could have their first IRBMs operational by the end of 1966, we believe it would be at least 1968 before an initial operational capability could be achieved. The French could almost certainly have fission warheads available for these missiles as soon as needed. We do not believe they could develop compatible thermonuclear warheads until about 1970.

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

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